1729

DISCONTENT

THE

UNIVERSAL MISERY.

IN AN

EPISTLE *to a* FRIEND.

Extendunt Palmas Ripæ ulterioris Amore. VIRG.

LONDON:

Printed for T. COOPER, at the *Globe* in *Ivy-Lane*, near *Paternoſter-Row.* M DCC XXXIV.

(Price One Shilling.)

THE DISCONTENT

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IN

An EPISTLE *to a* FRIEND.

WHILE you, my LOLLIUS, amidſt Cares and Strife,
Launch boldly forward in the Sea of Life;
I ſit triumphant on its peaceful Shore,
And calmly hear the noiſy Billows roar:
Beneath ſome Oak, whoſe ſolitary Shade
Gives Calm to Thought, to Contemplation Aid,
I view in Fancy diſtant Worlds paſs by,
And ſee Mankind with an impartial Eye.
A while, my LOLLIUS, to my Verſe attend,
Neglect the Stateſman, and indulge the Friend;
With me run o'er this Wilderneſs of Man,
Diſſect his Councils, and his Actions ſcan;
Obſerve what Paſſions in the Soul create
The Scenes of Buſineſs and the Cares of State;
You'll find, my Friend, from the ſame Fountain ſprings
The Want of Miſers, and the Grief of Kings;
Why one uneaſy, t'other ſo intent,
Both the ſame Poiſon fires of DISCONTENT.

'Tis ſomething abſent curſt Mankind admires,
Which flows not from our Wants, but our Deſires;
Alternate Hopes and Fears our Lives employ,
None, what they have, for what they wiſh, enjoy.
To Reaſon only, Nature could diſpenſe
Theſe Scenes of Fancy to delude our Senſe:
Inſects, inclos'd in Earth's perpetual Night,
Mourn not the Abſence of excluded Light:
Do Birds, to glide thro' the ſmooth River, try?
Or, doom'd to Waters, Fiſhes aim to fly?
From Nature each its Power of Senſe receives,
Proportion'd to the Sphere in which it lives;
To our ſuperior Faculties ſhe join'd
The gay deluſive Viſions of the Mind;
Ourſelves create the Phantoms we admire,
Still the fair Proſpects, as we graſp, retire.
Thus paſs our preſent Joys unheeded by,
While we purſue we know not what, or why,
Till, wearied in the Labyrinth, we die.

The Stateſman finds his own capricious Fate,
Condemn'd to guide the wavering Helm of State,
And bear, for Publick Good, the Publick Hate;
Tired with the Grandeur which the World admire,
Longs to his Country Villa to retire;

For-

Forgot to Fame, an eaſy Age to ſpend,
Where Envy's ſilent, and where Factions end;
Far from the World in Solitude to live,
And taſte that Peace his former Labours give.

Wiſe CATO, ſeeing thro' the Gloſs of State,
Knows that the greateſt Labours form the Great;
And from Ambition's giddy Heighth deſcends,
To private Pleaſures and impartial Friends:
But here he's anxious for his Country's Cauſe;
Maintains her Liberties, ſupports her Laws;
Bears the Fatigue and Troubles of a Poſt,
Nor is the Patriot with the Stateſman loſt.
O envious DISCONTENT, thy Pangs moleſt
The Hero's Slumbers, and the Patriot's Reſt.

But we deſcend, my Friend, to meaner Things,
Than cloud the Lives of Stoicks and of Kings;
From Reaſon theſe unfortunately groan,
Diſturb'd with Cares which Gods themſelves might own:
I only mean impartially to ſhow,
That Fools heap up unneceſſary Woe,
And Griefs which from ill-govern'd Paſſion flow.
We praiſe Ambition, Avarice we blame;
The Object different, the Purſuit's the ſame:
Obſerve Ambition from the Great Man's Breaſt
Diſpel the Calms of Pleaſure and of Reſt,

For

For ever in a troubled Ocean toſt,
Till Power is, but by extending, loſt.
In meagre HARPAX Avarice we trace
Thro' all the ſtarving Features of his Face;
Mines unexhauſted all his Thoughts employ,
Proud to poſſeſs, unable to enjoy;
Severely Poor, from Poverty he ſteers,
Damn'd to that Evil which alone he fears;
Still his Deſires, encreaſing with his Store,
Excite the inſatiate Appetite for more.
Thus to the Trav'ller, from the Rock appear
The ſeeming Limits of the circling Sphere;
But as he journies on, his wondering Eyes
Diſcover endleſs new Horizons riſe.

What ails his Grace ſo ſorrowful of late,
Pining in all the Elegance of State?
Blind to the Joys indulgent Fortune lends,
He ſits uneaſy in a Crowd of Friends;
Retires unhappy from his gay Alcove,
To ſigh in Temples, languiſh in a Grove.
Some dire Misfortune ſure diſturbs his Grace;
He wants a Ribbon, or has loſt a Place.

SENECIO feels that all his ill-got Store
Can't cure the Pains and Weakneſs of Threeſcore,

Curſes hard Fortune, that ſo late ſhe ſent
Riches to tantalize the Impotent.
Loaded with Hay, the Mule, compell'd to faſt,
Finds that a Burden which ſhe cannot taſte.
What Grief diſturbs Sir PLUME's diſorder'd Breaſt,
That once ſo flutter'd, and that once ſo dreſt?
Old CLODIO ſteals his CLELIA's Heart away,
For CLODIO wooes the moſt engaging Way.
PLUME ſighs to find no Beau can pleaſe the Fair,
Who peeps penurious in a Solitaire;
Even to his own admir'd Self he's blind,
While Thought, unfelt before, diſtracts his Mind;
And thus the Gods he chides: O VENUS, LOVE,
And all ye Guardians of us Beaux above,
Is it for this, your Dictates we obey,
And toy the tedious Hours of Life away?
For this, at your Academy of *France*,
I learnt to dreſs, to ogle, and to dance?
Suffered for this, Variety of Pain;
And ſqueez'd and faſted for this Shape in vain?
Even tempting Shape and Dreſs no more can move,
Money's the ſole Provocative to Love;
From this alone the Ladies Favours flow,
This makes the plodding Alderman a Beau;

This only ſhall my future Thoughts engage:
O give me Riches, and encreaſe my Age!
Thus he:---The vain Poſſeſſor of her Charms,
Old CLODIO, freezes in his CLELIA's Arms:
CLELIA and Gold his Deſtinies refuſe,
And give them Both to CLODIO, not to uſe.
Thus are our Fortunes to our Wiſhes wrong,
PLUME would be Rich, and CLODIO would be Young:
Thus, with what each deſires, while both are curſt,
His blooming Vigour dies, his Riches ruſt.

We'll change the Scene, and with thoſe Sages mix
Who ſmoke a ſpeculative Pipe at *Dick*'s;
The World's great Patriots! Here, in every Face,
The Fates of Empires and of Kings we trace:
The needy Tradeſman, with Imperial Frowns,
Guides diſtant Senates, and diſpoſes Crowns.
Here DISCONTENT breaks out in troubled Dreams
Of ſhort-liv'd Projects, viſionary Schemes,
For ever forming, and for ever croſt;
With diſtant Dangers pale, in foreign Tumults loſt.

See how that Crowd of Knaves and Fools reſort,
Where Fortune keeps her variable Court!
Change-Ally: Who but that fam'd *Iſthmus* knows,
Where the ſwift Stream of Riches ebbs and flows?

Here DISCONTENT ſits ſmiling by the Side,
And throws her Poiſon in th' infected Tide;
Still as they drink, th' infatuating Flood
Inflames the Spirits, and corrupts the Blood.
Next, to the Garret caſt the curious Eye,
Where Want and Envy in Aſylum lie;
Where the ſtern Critick modern Bards ſurveys,
And damns ſucceſsful Authors into Praiſe.
Here DISCONTENT's own Image may be ſeen,
With haggard Viſage and diſorder'd Mien:
How like to theſe are Stateſmen out of Place?
Both blame the World, unconſcious of Diſgrace;
To Bards and Miniſters Deſtruction brood,
And waſte in Envy, for the Publick Good.
The Lawyer ſees preſiding Juſtice doze,
And longs in Reverend Lamb-skin to repoſe;
O'erlooks his Brief with inattentive Eyes,
And in a Crowd of Fees and Clients ſighs.
The Doctor, with ſome Hundred Pounds a Year,
Who ne'er for Pulpit leaves his Elbow-Chair;
But while his meagre Curate feeds his Sheep,
Perhaps may Breakfaſt, or perhaps may ſleep:
Thus bleſt with All an humble Prieſt might pleaſe,
Yet wants a Mitre to compleat his Eaſe;

Had but his Merit in the World been ſeen,
He had been a Biſhop, or at leaſt a Dean.

O Discontent, thy Conqueſts but to name,
Would tire Sir W-------'s, or the Tongues of Fame:
To plague Mankind, what various Forms you find,
What Arts invent, to triumph o'er the Mind!
Gold, Empires, Schemes, and yielding Beauties ſhow,
To jilt the Miſer, Heroe, Stateſman, Beau:
Thro' Garrets, Shops, and Drawing-Rooms you range,
Viſit St. *James*'s, and frequent the *Change*;
O'er the deluded World your Wings you ſpread,
To hatch Chimera's in each teeming Head.
Nor do thy Pains alone, with Care and Strife,
Fill up the long Parentheſis of Life;
They watch the Cradle, at the Tomb attend,
Open with Senſe, and with our Reaſon end:
The Child, juſt uſher'd to the Realms of Light,
Cries for the firſt gay Object of his Sight;
While round his ſtiffening Corps Relations ply,
Joy in their Heart, and Sorrow in their Eye,
The Miſer's Arms his weighty Cask infold,
And claſp, in Pangs of Death, his darling Gold.

Nor do you more aſpiring Man infeſt,
Than ſofter Woman's ſympathiſing Breaſt.

You to the blooming Boſom dare intrude,
And Storms, where Nature ne'er deſign'd them, brood;
In the gay Maid thy Cruelties we trace,
And ſee thy Footſteps in the faireſt Face.
When the Cheek glows no more with uſual Fire,
And the Eye darts Deſtruction to Deſire;
Or when alone deſponding CHLOE ſits,
Diſguiſing Paſſion in Hyſterick Fits;
'Tis then thy Fiends in gloomy Shapes appear,
And ſwim triumphant in each Virgin Tear.

If to outſhine at Opera, Park, or Play,
Demands OLIVIA's brighteſt Looks to Day;
Then, if her Cheek an envious Pimple ſtains,
(Molehills will riſe upon the ſmootheſt Plains,)
Or if for want of Sleep her Colour dies,
And the Shafts fly leſs killing from her Eyes,
Forbidden by the faithful Glaſs to roam,
Penſive ſhe ſits, by thee oppreſs'd, at home.

How lately was the bright AURELIA ſeen,
Blooming with all the Beauties of Fifteen!
But now the Virgin, like the blaſted Flower,
Seems but the pale Survivor of an Hour.
No more her Cheeks with opening Roſes glow,
No more the Lillies in her Boſom blow;

She leaves Ridotto's for an Evening Walk,
And to a *French* Ragout prefers her Chalk.
With ſecret Grief AURELIA melts away,
Her Pangs increaſing as her Charms decay.
PHYLLIS, whom Gold and Equipage engage
To yield her Beauties up a Prey to Age,
Impatient waits her Bridegroom's Fate, but ſees
Her own reviving Arms o'ercome Diſeaſe:
In Wiſhes waſtes by Night, expects by Day,
And pines in pale Anxiety away.
She finds herſelf, by ſad Experience, ſold
For Dreams of Pleaſure, and for promis'd Gold.
Thus FAUSTUS ſigns his Doom for HELEN's Charms,
And claſps a wither'd Shadow in his Arms.
Old COQUETILLA ſure has all, nay more,
That forms the Female Pleaſures of Threeſcore:
Fortune to purchaſe all the Toys that pleaſe,
The gay Machine of Indolence and Eaſe:
Friends, Paint, Perfumes, gilt Books, and Ratafee;
Where then is COQUETILLA's Miſery?
She grieves to find, ſpite of repairing Paint,
Her Teeth are rotten, and her Eyes are faint;
Nor can be happy while blind Men prefer
The Children of this Century to her.

O DIS-

O DISCONTENT, you glory to annoy
The Scenes of Pleaſure, and the Seats of Joy;
Envious, in every Hive you caſt your Gall,
Squeak at the Opera, and diſturb the Ball:
When thy ſharp Pang the Virgin Boſom ſtings,
No Muſick's there, tho' SENESINO ſings.
If at the Dance ſhe ſits neglected by,
What Rage, what Fury, ſparkles in her Eye!
Not all the various Pleaſures can controul
Thy fatal Empire o'er the Female Soul:
Shame and Complexion, Pride and Decency,
O mighty Hero! all give Way to thee.
Should we to Rural Solitudes go down,
And leave the more conſpicuous Fools in Town;
Dire DISCONTENT, in every Proſpect ſhown,
Infeſts alike the Cottage and the Throne.
Even in the flowery Mead Ambition reigns,
And Thirſt of Glory fires the Rival Swains;
And as inſatiate Avarice is found,
In him who hoards a Penny, as a Pound:
HARPAX epitomiz'd, here heaps his Store,
To buy thoſe Acres which he plow'd before.
The ſprightly Ruſtick is in Thought a HECTOR,
In his low Views poor CLODPOLE a Director.

As at Aſſemblies, ſo upon the Green,
Clowns have the Hyp, and Damſels have the Spleen.
Here, undiſguis'd, the Paſſions are expreſs'd;
Ours are the ſame, but gilded more, and dreſs'd.
By different Views each different Soul's inclin'd,
Yet DISCONTENT's the Weed of every Mind.
In Happineſs our general Wiſhes end,
To the ſame Goal our various Labours tend.
Fancy alone directing every View,
Makes, what's a Gem to me, a Toy to you.
Hence weakeſt Minds the meaneſt Things employ,
Confin'd to Trifles in their Grief and Joy:
Hence, in the Coxcomb's light embroider'd Heart,
His ill-cut Waiſtecoat is the greateſt Smart;
Hence FULVIA, ſo regardleſs of a Man,
Grieves for BELINDA's Silk, or CHLOE's Fan;
Hence fair Miſs JENNY for her Monkey cries,
And grave DOMITIAN's labour after Flies:
Thus Joy or Grief a Dutcheſs' Breaſt may fill,
And hang, precarious, on belov'd Quadrille.
Is the vain Maid a Sacrifice to Shew?
The Taylor makes the Conqueſt, not the Beau;
Young giddy Girls their fair Affections fix
On Titles, Diamonds, and a Coach and Six.

Thus,

Thus, DISCONTENT, thy Origin we find;
'Tis Fancy frames the Fortune of the Mind.
O could we baniſh from the troubled Earth
This Fiend to Hell, from whence ſhe took her Birth,
Ambition then would fly this happy Seat,
And to her old Abodes with haſte retreat;
Pale Avarice haunt the greedy Wretch no more,
Loſt in thoſe hollow Mines ſhe made before;
And Envy, baniſh'd from the World, would go,
To ſeek for Comfort in the Shades below.
What laſting Joys would Mortals then behold,
Themſelves the Authors of an Age of Gold?
No more his Ship the wealthy Merchant lades,
To leave for *India*'s, *Britain*'s cooler Shades:
No more their private Schemes the Stateſmen brood,
Content to labour for the Publick Good.
Britain might Peace from ending Factions gain;
And CALEB praiſe, unable to complain:
Criticks and Poets, with unpitying Eyes,
Behold their Works in cloudy Vapours riſe,
Or calmly view them the Defence of Pyes:
H------ bring forth his unfrequented Store,
Be gay, and wear his Thread-bare Coat no more;

Without a Sigh an hoarded Shilling pay,
And eat, luxurious, three whole Meals a Day:
Pure Love alone the Female Bosom warm,
And Ease of Mind give Life to every Charm:
AMANDA bear Ill-luck with silent Grace,
Nor spoil her fair Complexion for an Ace:
PHYLLIS the Country might be taught to bear,
And CHLOE ride contented with a Pair:
Ev'n I to Love and Versify give o'er,
And be a Scribler and a Wretch no more.

FINIS.